

Top Tips for Preserving the Coast: A Beach-Goer's Guide

More than half the U.S. population lives along the coast and the average American spends 10 recreational days a year at the coast. With so many people at the coast, beaches can fall victim to the strain. You can reduce the impact you have on the beach by following these tips:

1

Stay off beach dunes and grasses. Beach dunes are the first line of defense against coastal storms and dune grass protects shoreline homes and businesses from erosion. When people walk, drive or bike over them, the dunes can collapse and leave the property behind them vulnerable.

2

Watch for public access signs. These signs, posted by your state's coastal program, indicate places — beaches, public piers, walkways, and parking lots — open to everyone.

3

Don't drive on the beach. Beaches are fragile! The sand, shells, grasses and animals that make up a beach can be crushed and destroyed under the weight of vehicles.

4

Pick up after your dog. Pet waste is a natural fertilizer that encourages marine plants to grow out of control, killing crabs and other fish and damaging the entire food chain. It means higher seafood prices and unemployment in coastal towns!

5

Clean up the beach. Pick up trash, even if it's not yours, and dispose of it in trash receptacles.

6

Never throw cigarettes onto the ground or out the car window, especially at the beach. Rainwater washes everything on the ground into rivers, bays and eventually to the beach. Cigarette filters don't break down and can cause harm to sea birds, and the entire food chain.

7

Never leave fishing line or hooks on the beach. Fishing line strangle marine animals. Hooks kill the fish that eat them and pose a threat to other people and animals walking on the beach.

8

Cut loops from six-pack yokes and other plastic items before disposing of them in trash receptacles. Marine animals swallow or become entangled in plastic and die, which threatens our entire food chain.

9

Recycle the containers you use at the beach. Recycling reduces waste and marine pollution.

10

Participate in coastal cleanup campaigns. If your city doesn't have one, start one! Call the Center for Marine Conservation's Marine Debris Information Office at (202) 429-5609 to learn how.

Pass the word on to other beach-goers.